

VICEROYS OF INDIA

Lord Canning (1856-1862)

Immediately after Queen Victoria's proclamation Lord Canning was appointed the first viceroy of British India. During his tenure the Indian Penal Code came into force in 1860 and the Indian Council Act of 1861 was passed by the British Parliament for setting up of legislative councils in the provinces, with Indians as members. This act strengthened the Viceroy's authority over his executive council substituting 'portfolio' or departmental system for corporate functioning. In the field of education, the universities of Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai were established.

Lord Elgin I (1862-1863)

Lord Elgin succeeded Lord Canning in 1862. During his regime, the Wahabis, a Muslim sect, revolted on the north-western frontiers but were suppressed. His untimely death brought Lord Lawrence to India as the next viceroy of India.

Sir John Lawrence (1864-1869)

Lawrence's tenure witnessed a war with Bhutan and famine in Orissa. Friendly relations were developed with the Afghans. He was severely defeated by the Bhutanese who were a constant source of trouble to the British in the frontier region.

Lord Mayo (1869-1872)

During his regime, the government was decentralized. He introduced several reforms in the administration and cut down many useless government expenses. The Mayo College in Ajmer was established in his honour. He improved the Andaman jail administration and made systems for the welfare of the prisoners. He was killed by a Wahabi prisoner in the Andaman jail premises.

Lord North Brooke (1872-1876)

During North Brooke's time, import duties were lowered and export duties were abolished in a bid

to improve trade. His position of neutrality in Afghan matters led the Russians to gain an upper hand in the central Asian region. The Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury overruled the viceroy's decision to be neutral in Afghan matters and appointed a British advisor to the Afghan Ameer. Viceroy Brooke did not take this lightly and resigned from the post and returned to England in 1876.

Lord Lytton (1876-1880)

Lytton held a Durbar in Delhi, proclaiming Queen Victoria as the Empress of India. The Second Afghan War fought during his tenure aroused discontent because of the high cost involved and the situation was worsened by a severe famine in the Deccan. Earlier the government used to collect famine relief funds only during the time of famines, but Lytton regularized the fund. The present provincial famine code is based upon the Famine Committee reports to Lytton's tenure. In 1878, the Vernacular Press Act restricted the freedom of the press.

Lord Ripon (1880-1884)

During Ripon's period, there was a phase of progress with the Factories Act, 1881, which tried to improve the position of factory workers; it restricted the working hours of both women and children and allowed the local government to propose rules. Freedom of the press was restored by repealing the Vernacular Press Act. The first census of India took place in 1871.

Lord Dufferin (1884-1888)

Lord Dufferin succeeded Lord Ripon as the viceroy of India. During his regime, Burma (now Myanmar) was invaded in 1895 and as a result was annexed to the British Empire in 1889. The Indian National Congress was also formed during this time. Dufferin appointed the Public Service Commission in 1886. The Tenancy Act, 1887, was passed during his tenure to safeguard the interest of farmers.

Lord Lansdown (1888-1894)

During Lansdown's tenure, the Second Indian Council Act of 1892 was passed. He had formerly served as the Deputy Secretary in the Defence Department. The boundary line, as per the Durand Treaty, was drawn up between British India and Afghanistan; it was known as the Durand Line after Sir Mortimer Durand who defined the demarcation. Kashmir was returned to its king in 1905, during Lansdown tenure.

Lord Elgin II (1894-1899)

Lokmanya Tilak was imprisoned and released during Elgin's viceroyalty. The great famine struck India in 1896, during this period. Elgin formed the Opium Committee to preach the ill effects of opium addiction to people. He retired in 1899 and was succeeded by Lord Curzon.

Lord Curzon (1899-1905)

During Curzon's period, Queen Victoria died in 1901 and was succeeded by Edward VII who was declared King Emperor of India. The Swadeshi Movement and Partition of Bengal (1905-1911) were crucial events that took place during his tenure. Curzon is remembered for his Police reforms under the guidance of Sir Andrew Frazer. He brought about education reforms by setting up the Raleigh Commission. Curzon passed the Ancient Monument Protection Act, 1904, and the Punjab Land Act, 1905.

Lord Minto II (1905-1910)

Minto II's term saw a lot of discontentment among people. The Muslim League, formed in 1906, supported the Partition of Bengal and opposed the Swadeshi Movement and this led to major differences between Hindus and Muslims. The Indian Council Act (the Minto-Morley Reforms) was passed in 1909.

Lord Harding II (1910-1916)

Notable events during Harding II's tenure were the visit of King George V and Queen Mary in December 1911, to celebrate the accession of King

George V. A Great Durbar was held in Delhi in their honour. Further, the capital of India was shifted from Kolkata to Delhi. The Partition of Bengal was annulled during his term. The First World War broke out and the Indian National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi supported the government in fighting the war.

Lord Chelmsford (1916-1922)

Important events during Chelmsford's term were as follows: (i) the August Declaration of 1917, whereby control over the Indian government would be gradually transferred to the Indian people; (ii) the Government of India Act, 1919, (Montague-Chelmsford Reforms) was passed; (iii) the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre that took place on 13 April 1919; (iv) organization of Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement called satyagraha and (v) the Rowlatt Act of 1919. Agitation began all over the country against the Rowlatt Act.

Lord Reading (1922-1926)

Lord Chelmsford resigned and was succeeded by Lord Reading, in 1922, who suppressed the non-cooperation movement. Other significant events of his term were as follows: (i) the Ahmedabad Session of 1921; (ii) Formation of Swaraj Party; (iii) Communal riots of 1922 and (iv) Prince of Wales visit to India. The Khilafat Movement and Non-cooperation Movement were at their peak during his tenure.

Lord Irwin (1926-1931)

The Simon Commission was appointed during Lord Irwin's term. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact, 1931, was signed and political prisoners were released. The Congress passed the independence resolution in 1929 and Mahatma Gandhi began his Dandi March (1930) and the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930). The First Round Table Conference held in England in 1930 was attended by Mahatma Gandhi.

Lord Willingdon (1931-1936)

The viceroyalty of Lord Willingdon saw the holding of Second Round Table Conference. The Communal Award, August 1932, by Ramsay

MacDonald, assigned seats different religious communities. Mahatma Gandhi went on a fast unto death in protest against this division. The Third Round Table Conference took place and the Government of India Act, 1935, was passed.

Lord Linlithgow (1936-1943)

During Linlithgow's viceroyalty, provincial autonomy and Congress ministries were established. The Muslim League leader, Jinnah, demanded the state of Pakistan for the Muslims. The Cripps Mission of 1942 was a failure and the Quit India Resolution was passed by the Congress. Its leaders were thrown into prison. The Second World War broke out in 1939.

Lord Wavell (1944-1947)

The Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) provided for an interim government and laid down the procedure for framing the Indian Constitution. The observation of Direct Action Day in Kolkata, by the Muslim League, led to riots and bloodshed. On 20 February 1947, the Prime Minister of England, Clement Atlee, announced that the transfer of power would take place before June 1948. Riots and disturbances continued vigorously in demand for the partition of India.

Lord Mountbatten (March 1947-August 1947)

Lord Mountbatten was the last Viceroy and the first Governor-General of free India. The partition of India was decided by the June 3rd Plan, and the Indian Independence Act, 1947, was passed, which made India an independent nation on 15 August 1947, and Pakistan a free nation on 14 August 1947. Lord Mountbatten retired in June 1948 and was succeeded by C. Rajagopalachari, who became the first Indian Governor-General of independent India.

Causes of Revolt of 1857

The Revolt of 1857, also known as the First War of Independence, was the most dramatic event in India's struggle against foreign rule. But it was not an event that occurred all of a sudden. It was the peak of many decades of long tradition of severe popular resistance to British rule. The consolidation of British power in India was a lengthy process of piecemeal conquest and the colonization of the economy and society.

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